



Department of Highways Employee Newsletter

May 1991

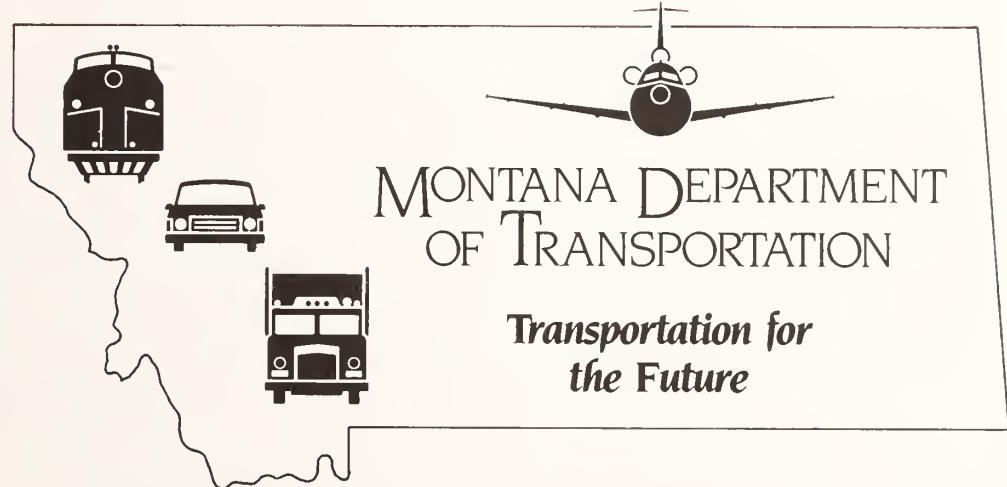
DOT becomes a Reality

It's official! As of July 1, 1991, the Department of Highways will become part of the new Montana Department of Transportation.

At ceremonies in Helena on April 19, Governor Stephens signed Senate Bill 164, a major piece in the administration's 1991 legislative agenda. Stephens said the new department is the result of Montanans working together to improve state services.

"Our DOT program has bipartisan support from lawmakers, it's been approved and endorsed by Montana's transportation industry and Montanans across the state joined with us in advocating this format, which better coordinates our air, ground and rail services. We're appreciative of this support and we're ready to put our program into action," Stephens said.

"Montana must be able to efficiently move people and products in, out of and around the state in order to be competitive economically," Stephens said. "That's why the creation of a Department of Transportation was so important."



The new organization consolidates transportation services now provided by the Departments of Highways, Commerce and Revenue. It will have separate divisions dealing with highways, aeronautics, administration, rail and transit, as well as motor carrier services. All divisions will be housed in the Highway Building at 2701 Prospect Avenue in Helena, with the aeronautics division located in its current facility at the airport.

Highway's Director John Rothwell said the new DOT will offer "one stop" shopping for the state's transportation industry, and will serve the state's trucking industry

more efficiently.

"The combination of the various modes," said Rothwell, "will allow the department to give better overall service to our customers, improve the working relationships with our suppliers—the contractors, the railroads, the bus companies—and, I feel, save quite a bit of money and provide an important benefit as Montana's economy adapts and grows in the future."

"Our job in the 90s," he said, "is not to be just highway managers, but to be mobility managers—covering all modes of transportation and keeping clearly in mind that we're here to serve the public."♦

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From the Director

The department received good support from the 1991 Legislature. What's more, I expect that support will continue if we continue to do a good job with the resources they've given us.

The budget approved for fiscal year 1992 will increase to \$313 million and \$319.4 million in '93. The substantial increase includes an additional \$66 million for contractor payments over the next two-year period in response to a 20 percent increase in federal funding. The budget for personnel costs and consultant payments will also increase in order to cover the larger construction program.

I'm pleased the pay bill that finally passed the legislature incorporates the "market-based" pay philosophy for the first time. This approach should help our department and others in state government attract new employees where salaries are too low in certain technical and professional areas.

In a separate, but related development, we were granted a pay exception by Governor Stephens for certain engineering positions in the department. As a result, we were able to recently hire ten new engineers from MSU, two of them women, with the possibility of five more being hired in the near future. These new additions to the engineering staff fill a serious void and leave the department much better prepared for the increases expected in the construction program.

Even with the increases, it's obvious now the need that must be addressed in the *next* legislative session is increased funding for maintenance. The maintenance budget is too tight and I'm convinced the public will not tolerate a cut in service. We'll have to do our best with what we've got now, but the next session of the legislature will have to address increased maintenance funding.

A number of other issues were addressed in the legislature, including an increase in the *per diem* rates from \$24 to \$30 per day for lodging and \$1 per day for meals. Some changes in

(continued in next column)

New Discipline Policy Explained

An updated discipline policy will be in place this month, according to John Rothwell, Director of Highways.

"What we're looking for," Rothwell said, "is consistency and a vehicle to treat all employees fairly and equally."

In the past, employees could be terminated for theft of property or use of alcohol on state time. Penalties weren't enforced equally across the department, however, and the same offense could end in termination for one person, days off without pay for another or even an oral reprimand—it just depended on the discretion of the supervisor.

The updated discipline policy clearly spells out offenses and penalties for all department employees, according to Jack Holstrom, legal counsel for Human Resources.

Employees will be terminated for stealing property valued at \$25 or more from the department or another employee. The policy states that drinking liquor in a state vehicle is also cause for termination, as well as driving a state vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If false information is recorded on time sheets, construction records or weight sheets, employees will be suspended without pay for ten or more days, demoted or terminated. The policy states that clerical errors aren't considered false entries.

Rest breaks are addressed in the new policy, as well. Employees can take a 15-minute break during the first half of the shift and a 15-minute break during the second half. Rest breaks can't be used to extend lunch periods or allow for early departures or late arrivals.

A copy of the updated policy will be sent to all department employees by the end of May, according to Russ McDonald, Human Resources Administrator.♦

From the Director, continued

GVW laws were made, a change in the speed zone law was made to allow local governments some leeway in school zones, plus a handful of other bills passed affecting the department. Of course, one major accomplishment for the department and the administration was the passage of the DOT bill described on the front page of this issue of the *Interchange*.

Just as the legislature was wrapping up we received word of a new federal funding reauthorization proposal from Senators Moynihan (NY) and Burdick (ND).

As you may recall, the Bush administration's proposal for reauthorization, as well as one by Senators Reid (NV) and Baucus of Montana received quite a bit of attention as the October deadline for reauthorization approaches. But the so-called "Moynihan Bill" quickly drew attention from the others.

While it maintains the current federal

aid system and allows a great deal of flexibility in the transfer of funds, things Montana supports, it's major provision would essentially transfer decision-making on a major portion of highway funding from the state to metropolitan planning organizations. Funding would shift to urban areas and a large portion of funding would be "taken off the top" for special programs such as magnetic levitation and air quality improvement, at the expense of highway construction. What's more, there appears to be authority in the bill to allow the executive branch of federal government to reclassify the highway system, with one possible result being to further shift funding from rural areas.

As the *Interchange* was going to press, Deputy Director for Planning Bob Champion and I travelled to Washington, DC, to testify before the Senate committee and work with our delegation and other like-minded states.♦

From Missoula— Excellence Awards

The Missoula District recently established employee excellence awards based on criteria other than outstanding performance appraisals, according to Martha Vogt, Centralized Services Supervisor.

"Criteria may include long-term service, dependability or special effort on projects," Vogt said.

Each supervisor made recommendations and final selections were made by District Engineer Jim Weaver.

Each award winner received a gift certificate to a local restaurant and a commemorative plaque, purchased with funds donated by the supervisors. The winners' names were entered on a large plaque located in both the district and area offices.

The employees who received the awards are:

Sheila Sullivan, Engineering Technician III, who was selected for outstanding office management of the Darby North and South Project. Review and audits by district personnel found a highly efficient office with quality and error-free project documentation.

Don Loveless, Sectionman in Kalispell, is recognized for his consistent hard work and dedication to the department. He's known for his positive attitude and willingness to lend a helping hand.

Howard Kyriss, Engineering Technician III in Kalispell, meets or exceeds all criteria used to measure excellent performance, according to his supervisor. His work is consistently outstanding and his diplomatic skills with contractors averted potential confrontations.

Rusty Wrigg, Maintenance Chief, is known for his well-organized division and his leadership in developing and using new ideas and products. His use of new de-icing chemicals, asphalt mixing contracts and installation of remote pavement and weather stations are recent examples of his efficient and cost-effective projects.

Ralph Hobbs, Equipment Operator II in Hamilton and department employee for 34 years, has a flawless driving record. He's recognized as one of the best motor patrol operators in the Missoula District and is known for his outstanding carpentry and plumbing skills.♦

From Billings—Outstanding Employee Award Nominees

The Billings District nominated five people for outstanding employees of 1991. **Bob Weber**, employee since 1980, is Lab Supervisor II in the Lewistown office. He's done an outstanding job managing both the Billings and Lewistown labs and is known for his positive attitude and willingness to participate in extra projects.

Gerry Brown, department employee since 1976, is an Engineering Tech II and regularly "goes the extra mile" to complete a job. He's known for his hard work, leadership and dedication, which helped his crew accept multiple assignments and provide quality work.

Gordon Charlton was nominated by the district as Maintenance Man of the Year in 1988 for his work as section supervisor in the Roundup area. Despite the constant demands of maintaining these roads and challenging health problems, Gordon is known for his outstanding sense of dedication to the department, his crew and the traveling public.

Art Krantz ran his own construction company in the Billings area for 12 years before before being hired as a Truck Driver UST in 1987. He was promoted to Carpenter in September of 1989 and was selected for his skill, cheerful attitude and outstanding effort given to all projects.

Dick Wegner, department employee since 1958, worked in most phases of highway maintenance and construction from Engineering Aide to Field Maintenance Chief. He retired in March after 32 years of service.♦

Retirements

William Wertman, a GVW II officer in Billings, retired in January with 39 years of service in the department. Others retiring in 1991 with over 30 years of service include: **Victor Harmon**, Whitehall, 35 years, 11 months; **Raymond Schaak**, Hardin, 34 years, 3 months; **Willard Neighbors**, Missoula, 34 years, 1 month; **Edward Reiser**, Bozeman, 32 years, 9 months; **Dick Wegner**, Billings, 32 years, 2 months.

Those with over 20 years include: **Patricia Letendre**, Bozeman, 29 years, 9 months; **Karl Norvell**, Libby, 29 years, 3 months; **Harold Merwin**, Flaxville, 26 years, 3 months; **Florence Buzzas**, Helena, 22 years, 1 month.

Others retiring this year include: **Michael Smith**, Helena, 16 years, 6 months; **Dorothy Trask**, Lewistown, 13 years, 5 months; **Allen Jones**, Clancy, 6 years, 10 months.

Service Awards

Service awards were presented in February, March and April to:

35 years: J.C. Clemmer, Marx Kemmer, Neale Sikveland, John Sprunger, Harold Wiebe.

30 years: Lewis Harrell, Jack Liedle, Donald Stewart.

25 years: Darrell Daw, Marvin Holmquist, Clifford Kirby, Tony Lanch, Carl Peil, Edward Reuterdahl, Myron Tucker, Ronald Williams.

20 years: David Adams, Charles Bauman, Frank Moore, Marvin Rau, Jack Siemens.

15 years: Randy Aafedt, Mark Beckedahl, Gerald Brown, William Cloud, Larry Dassinger, Frank Jaconetty, Mark Leighton, Jerry Lynch, Russell McDonald, Karl Pula, Sally Ann Russell, Janice Schutt, David Sereday, John Starcevich, George Trask.

10 years: Lonny Alexander, Allen Baier, Frederick Bente, Daniel Gravage, James Koch, Kenneth Lambeth, Mark Moberley, Terrance O'Boyle, Charles Olson, David Peters, Gary Thielen.

5 years: Kent Barnes, Kenneth Bidwell, Raymond Brown, John Brummer, Susan Colyer, Dennis Doll, Sharon Gray, Gregory Hofman, Larry Johns, David Johnson, Patrick Kenney, Leonard Linch, Michael Lynch, Richard Munger, Margie Nasheim, Wayne Nelson, Helen Osterman, William Sansom, Louise Stoner, Dick Turner, Roy Ventura, Jr.♦

The *Interchange* is edited and produced by Dennis Unsworth and Jeannie Huntley, Public Affairs Bureau, Helena, MT, 444-6200.

Health Benefits Help

Have you ever wondered how much your insurance would pay on a medical or mental health claim? Or, if you qualify for out-of-state travel reimbursement for medical care? There's no cost to you to find out ahead of time and the extra effort can save you money in the long run.

Linda Kaiser, Administrative Officer of the health plan and an employee of the Department of Administration (D of A), explained that the state is self-insured and contracts with other companies for health services.

"Blue Cross/Blue Shield works for us," she said. "The State of Montana has a contract with them to provide claims service and *Managed Care* assistance."

Questions about claims are handled by Kathy Wildish and Vicky George of Blue Cross/Blue Shield, who can be reached at 444-8315 or 1-800-423-0805. They help predetermine potentially costly medical services. According to Wildish, in some instances employees traveling out of Montana for medical care can even be reimbursed for half of their round-trip airfare or \$.23/mile—one way—for one visit and one follow-up visit.

If a claim is denied and formally appealed and denied again through Blue Cross/Blue Shield, it can then be appealed through Kaiser at the D of A. She can be reached at 444-3946.

Managed Care provides information on medical care options and alternatives for potentially lengthy and high-cost medical problems, Kaiser said. Cases are reviewed by a specially trained nurse familiar with local and regional health care resources. The nurse meets with the patient and family to discuss the medical situation and then, with written consent from the covered employee, meets with the physician. In some cases, treatment options not normally covered by the benefit plan are approved for payment, Kaiser said.

It's important to call *Managed Care* for any type of hospitalization or an

Department Employees in the Gulf

Many department employees were touched in some way by Operation Desert Storm. If you didn't have someone serving in the Gulf, you knew someone who was.

Our troops are coming home now and the department, according to Director John Rothwell, appreciates their commitment and service. "We are privileged," he said, "to employ the following men who served":

Steve Garrison, Lawyer V, Helena,
James Martin, Designer II, Helena,
Joe Braunbeck, Administrative Assistant IV, Lewistown,
David Fettters, GVW Officer II, Butte,
Fred Bente, Civil Engineer Specialist V, Helena,
Bill Rowley, Lab Technician, Helena and
Danny Novak, Maintenance Utility Worker, Great Falls.♦

additional \$100 per admission will be applied to your deductible, according to information supplied by *Managed Care*. The telephone numbers are 1-800-635-5271 or 444-8550 (in Helena).

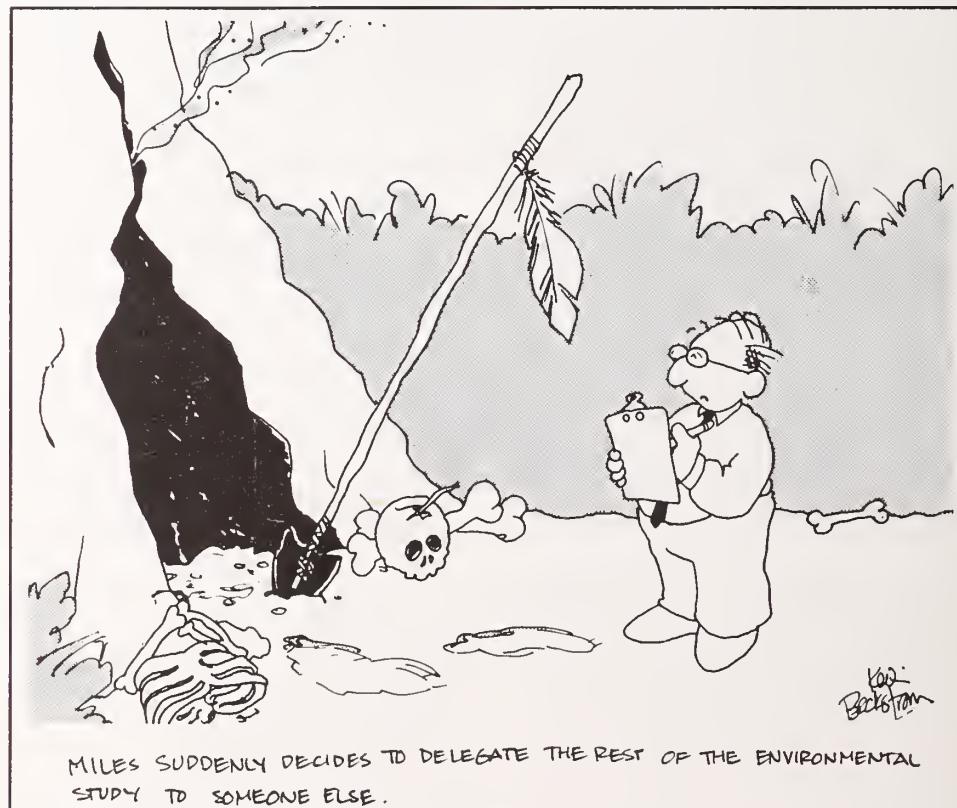
For nonemergency hospitalization, you must call:

- before the hospitalization, or
- within 24 hours after admission, or
- on the first working day after the admission.

For emergency hospitalization, you must call:

- within 48 hours after admission, or
- on the first working day after admission.

"Although you are required to call *Managed Care* when hospitalized," Kaiser said, "you're not required to use it." However, she added, "most employees who use the service are pleased with the results."♦



Cartoon courtesy of Kevin Beckstrom and the Utah DOT, Salt Lake City, Utah.

